

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6619

INFO AMCONSUL ZAGREB

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 3148

DEPT PLEASE PASS FBI

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC PFOR YO US (COMA, MEDI)

SUBJ: FURTHER ON AMCIT COMA'S DIFFICULTIES

REF: BELGRADE 0615

1. AS REPORTED REFTTEL AMCIT MEDI COMA RELEASED FROM PRISON IN EARLY JANUARY. IN LATE MARCH COMA CAME TO EMBASSY TO REPORT THAT SUP AUTHORITIES IN STRUGA, MACEDONIA, WERE HOLDING HIS U.S. PASSPORT. COMA TOLD CONOFF HE HAD NOT REPORTED HIS DIFFICULTIES SOONER BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT TO CAUSE HIMSELF ANY MORE TROUBLE WITH YUGOSLAV AUTHORITIES WHICH HE THOUGHT HE WOULD BE DOING BY INVOLVING EMBASSY.

2. COMA REPEATEDLY STATED IN LATE MARCH AND SUBSEQUENTLY THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHY AUTHORITIES IN STRUGA, WHICH IS NEAR ALBANIAN BORDER, WOULD NOT RETURN HIS PASSPORT. HE SAID THAT EACH TIME HE WENT TO SUP OFFICES TO REQUEST PASSPORT HE WAS QUESTIONED ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF ALBANIANS LIVING IN U.S. ACCORDING TO COMA, HE ALWAYS REPLIED THAT HE WAS APOLITICAL PERSON WHO SPENT ALL OF HIS TIME ON HIS BUSINESS IN FLORIDA (HE AND HIS BROTHER OWN A MOTEL IN ORLANDO BEACH) AND THAT HE WAS NOT INVOLVED IN POLITICS OF ANY KIND;
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BESIDES, COMA ADDED, THERE WERE NO ALBANIANS THAT HE

KNEW OF IN ORLANDO BEACH.

3. WHEN HE FIRST CAME TO THE EMBASSY ON JAN 29 AFTER HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON, HE WOULD NOT DISCUSS THE REASONS FOR HIS ARREST. HE SEEMED EQUALLY RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS HIS SUBSEQUENT DIFFICULTIES AND CONOFF WAS NEVER CONVINCED THAT COMA WAS ENTIRELY FORTHCOMING.

4. AFTER COMA INFORMED EMBASSY OF HIS CONTINUING TROUBLES IN LATE MARCH, CONOFF IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED CONSULAR AFFAIRS SECTION OF FEDERAL SECRETARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS (AFSA) FOR ASSISTANCE. SEVERAL INQUIRIES OVER COURSE OF NEXT TWO WEEKS BROUGHT REPLY THAT FSFA HAD CONTACTED "APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES" AND WAS WAITING FOR A REPORT.

5. AT THIS POINT AMBASSADOR INSTRUCTED POLCOUNS TO CONTACT AIDE TO BLAGOY POPOV, PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF MACEDONIA. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR LAST FALL POPOV HAD ASSURED HIM THAT "THERE WILL BE NO TOTH CASES IN MACEDONIA." POLCOUNS WAS INFORMED IN DUE COURSE THAT COMA'S PASSPORT WOULD BE RETURNED TO EMBASSY THROUGH FSFA AND THAT COMA SHOULD CONTACT "APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES" TO ARRANGE DEPARTURE.

6. FINALLY, ON MAY 5 FSFA RETURNED COMA'S PASSPORT TO EMBASSY. DIPLOMATIC NOTE NOTED THAT "THE AFOREMENTIONED PERSON IS A CITIZEN OF THE SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA." COMA CAME TO EMBASSY ON MAY 10 AND CONOFF EXPLAINED THAT HE NEEDED TO CONTACT SUP IN STRUGA OR BELGRADE BEFORE HE COULD LEAVE THE COUNTRY BECAUSE HIS VISA HAD EXPIRED LAST FALL. DESPITE ATTEMPTS TO GET HIM TO DO SO, COMA PERSISTED IN HIS BELIEF THAT HE WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE LEAVING THE COUNTRY AND SAID HE PLANNED TO LEAVE THAT DAY FROM BELGRADE AIRPORT. HE SAID HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN HAD HAD NO PROBLEMS LEAVING IN MARCH EVEN THOUGH THEIR VISAS HAD EXPIRED. COMA IGNORED CONOFF'S COMMENT THAT THEY HAD HAD NO DIFFICULTIES WITH AUTHORITIES AND HAD NOT BEEN ARRESTED.

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7. DURING THIS CONVERSATION CONOFF AGAIN ASKED COMA FOR HIS OPINION REGARDING HIS DIFFICULTIES. THIS TIME HE DOWN-PLAYED SUP QUESTIONING ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF ALBANIANS AND SAID THAT MACEDONIANS JUST HARD TO GET ALONG WITH AND THAT HE HAD MADE ENEMIES IN STRUGA BECAUSE HE HAD LEFT TO GO TO U.S. WHERE HE WAS NOW "SUCCESSFUL" BUSINESSMAN.

8. EMBASSY STILL NOT CERTAIN WHY COMA'S PASSPORT
WAS HELD BY AUTHORITIES IN STRUGA. ACCORDING TO
COMA'S BROTHER IN U.S., COMA DID RETURN ON MAY 10.
EMBASSY DOES NOT KNOW IF HE ENCOUNTERED ANY
DIFFICULTIES AT AIRPORT IN BELGRADE.
SILBERMAN

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